

NOV 29 1950

Kotzebue, Alaska  
Nov. 15, 1950

J. Earl Jackson, Secretary  
Dept. of Work in Alaska  
Presbyterian Church  
156 Fifth Ave.  
New York 10, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Jackson:

Your letter of September 22 to Mrs. Samuel J. Walker of Whittier, California was sent to our office of the Board of Missions at Whittier and then on to us at Kotzebue for consideration. As this correspondence reached us today we have not had an opportunity to contact our fellow-workers on the Field or make any suggestions to our Home office. However we feel you should know that your communication has been received and is greatly appreciated.

You may be sure that we were surprised to learn that Rev. Buchanan is not planning to return to Kotzebue. We understood that it was quite certain that they were planning to return next year, or send someone to replace them.

Rev. Buchanan and his family came to this community about four years ago feeling that another church was needed here and that this area should have an opportunity to hear of the gift of the Holy Spirit as manifest through the Gift of Tongues. He was just beginning to build as we returned for our second term on the Field. We called at his home and discussed Kingdom matters in this area and have been in his home on other occasions but we could never persuade him to make a friendly call on us. Even in matters of business he would send someone else to represent him. Throughout his ministry here he has been very antagonistic toward our church and program and the reason why we never could quite understand. They worked hard to get everyone they could into their church regardless of how faithfully they were tied to our work. Few of the adults followed them but some of the children whose parents attended no church were attracted there by one gift or another. But what appeared strange was that the few adults and children that went to Rev. Buchanan's church could never be encouraged to attend our services. Even during our Conferences when many Catholic and non-church goers were present these people were conspicuously absent. What the basis of this antagonism was we never understood. It may have been because the Friends do not baptize or serve communion and thus were considered unscriptural or because we instructed our people against the false teaching of the Gift of Tongues as an only evidence of the Gift of the Spirit of God. Perhaps Rev. Buchanan took this teaching as an attack upon him personally. We only know that it was very difficult for us to work with him here and do not know how we would feel about our Board taking over his church. When he was selling some of his equipment a short time ago he appeared willing to sell us what we might want of it. But taking over his work might be a different matter.

The building is quite low, would seat about a hundred people, is not too well constructed and is not in a very desirable location. We are of the impression that his Sunday School runs about fifty in numbers and have no idea what his one preaching service in the evening attracted. Certainly there must have been some.



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Should the presbyterians or some other church take over the affairs of Rev. Buchanan's church they would undoubtedly have a small group with which to begin. Kotzebue, like other villages of its kind, has many people who do not attend any church regularly. We have here many distracting influences such as pool halls, a theater, dance halls and gambling places operated mostly by white men seeking to glean a living off the local Eskimo population. Through the years we have seen these influences take their toll of church attendance. Whether the presence of another Protestant church would make any difference in the number who are not going to church, we do not know. Rev. Buchanan did not have a great deal of success. Many that he gathered came out of our group. It would appear that one Protestant church in a community of this size would be enough. There are about seven hundred people here. A man and wife should be able to care for a village like this quite well if they do not have other responsibilities. It is our hope that our Mission will be able to make such arrangements in the near future. There has been a Catholic church here for about fifteen years with a resident priest.

At present it is our judgment that if our Board could and would take over Rev. Buchanan's work it would be the best plan but if this is not possible there is no other church we would desire more to see here than the Presbyterian. We appreciate greatly your attitude toward this matter and consideration for the work that has been established here for so many years. The few contacts we have had with the Presbyterian workers in this country have been the most pleasant. We regard the work that they have been doing highly. Percy Ipalook and family are here and attend our services. Should the Presbyterians send a pastor to work here we are sure that we could cooperate with them fully. There are certain non-cooperating groups that would like to work in this area and have sent representatives to some of our villages. It would be unfortunate for our work and the general welfare of the Kingdom for one of them to take over this church. We are glad to see you give the matter serious consideration.

What recommendations the workers here on the field will make to our Home office we are not sure and what their final decision will be we do not know but for the welfare of everyone we will do what we can to bring about an early answer to your inquiry. Any information that we may give you relative to the situation here that you may desire we will be happy to send.

Sincerely yours,

*Delos Westbrook*

Delos Westbrook, Field Supt.

Copies:  
Donald Spitler  
General Superintendent  
Box 389  
Whittier, California



*All file Alaska  
Kotzebue from file etc.*

December 6, 1950

Dr. Donald Spitler  
General Superintendent  
Box 389  
Whittier, California

Dear Dr. Spitler:

We have received a very fine statement from Delos Westbrook, Field Superintendent of your work in Kotzebue, Alaska, concerning the situation in Kotzebue and are wondering what the reaction of your church will be toward his recommendation.

Alaska has so much territory to cover to provide an adequate spiritual ministry and so much support must come from the States for it that we certainly should not pile up on top of each other and waste the limited amount of missionary funds which are available. In accordance with the picture which comes to us from Mr. Westbrook, our reaction would be that we should not enter Kotzebue even if there would be some argument in favor of our going because of our other work in the area. It would be our preference to have The Friends take over the entire work in Kotzebue and for us to keep a working cooperative relationship with all of the Protestant agencies in the area.

It may be possible that Mr. Buchanan would not consider turning over their building and their group of people to your workers, in which case there would not be much that you could do about it but would seem far better to align with the work which is already there than to have another church come in to compete with your work in a ministry to a relatively small group of available people.

Sincerely yours,

J. Earl Jackman, Secretary  
Department of Work in Alaska

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